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RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY 2988  
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SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

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SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:  
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Mideast

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Key stories in the media:  
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Israel Radio quoted a senior US official in the entourage of  
Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice as saying that the Annapolis

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conference will be convened by the end of the month. The radio reported that the London-based Al-Quds Al-Arabi quoted Palestinian sources as saying that the US will draft a declaration of principles. Israel Radio cited a contradictory US statement. Makor Rishon-Hatzofe quoted Secretary Rice as saying on Monday that PM Ehud Olmert has agreed to the establishment of a Palestinian state by the end of 2008. Israel Radio quoted Defense Minister Ehud Barak as saying today at the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee that Israel is prepared to make far-reaching concessions at Annapolis. Barak also remarked that a large-scale military operation in Gaza was unlikely to be conducted soon. Yediot reported that over the past few days Knesset members from the coalition and the opposition have held consultations around the so-called "Jerusalem Law" -- voted in 1980 -- that anchors the integrity of centrality of Jerusalem to the State of Israel. The newspaper said that the issue appears has become current following PM Olmert's statement that all issues will be open at Annapolis and later.

Ha'aretz reported that on Monday Yisrael Beiteinu MK Israel Hasson, a former deputy chief of the Shin Bet, lashed out at PM Olmert's talks with the Palestinians, terming the upcoming Annapolis conference "a fantasy, not a vision." Hasson punned that the upcoming meeting should be called Anopheles, the mosquito that carries malaria, because it "bears all the signs of malaria: delusions, tremors and a high fever." Ha'aretz reported that speaking off the record, senior Kadima MKs complained that Olmert was dragging the party too far to the left. Ha'aretz reported that on Monday Yisrael Beiteinu's Chairman, Strategic Affairs Minister Avigdor Lieberman warned that his party will stick to its red lines, which bar any discussion of the core issues at the meeting. However, the party has not yet threatened to quit the coalition, and Ha'aretz quoted senior Kadima officials as saying that this is because Olmert has reassured Lieberman on this point. Shas, for its part, is taking comfort from Olmert's statement that Annapolis is merely the beginning of the process, not its end. Likud, in contrast, is urging Shas and Yisrael Beiteinu to quit the coalition immediately. The Jerusalem Post quoted Vice PM Haim Ramon as saying that PM Olmert will present any peace deal formulated at the Annapolis meeting to the Israeli people if his Kadima-based coalition breaks up following the meeting.

Visiting Representative Gary Ackerman (D-NY), chairman of the House Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia, was quoted as saying on Monday in an interview with The Jerusalem Post that the US has not done enough to prepare the Middle East for the Annapolis meeting. In an interview with Ha'aretz on Monday, Ackerman was quoted as saying that an estimated USD 20 million is smuggled from Sinai into the Gaza Strip each month. Ackerman pointed an accusing finger at Egypt, arguing that Cairo's failure to control the border with the Gaza Strip helps to empower Hamas.

Israel Radio quoted chief PA negotiator Ahmed Qurei (Abu Ala) as saying at a Saban Forum dinner held at President Shimon Peres' residence last night that settlement activity should be halted, outposts removed, Palestinian prisoners released, and the Palestinian institutions returned to Jerusalem. Makor Rishon-Hatzofe quoted Peres as saying that failure at Annapolis is not an alternative but a catastrophe.

The Jerusalem Post and Makor Rishon-Hatzofe quoted Internal Security Minister Avi Dichter as saying on Monday at the Saban Forum that Syria is mentally ready for peace, but that it is uncertain whether Israel or the US is ready.

Yediot reported that 3,000 of Sderot's 22,000 residents have left the city over the past six months.

Yediot bannered the behavior of fans of the Beitar Jerusalem soccer team, who on Sunday booed the name of Yitzhak Rabin. Leading media reported that PM Olmert, a lifelong devotee of the club, slammed the "violent brutes'" actions. Makor Rishon-Hatzofe said that the fans "kicked the consensus." Leading media quoted the club owner, oligarch Arkady Gaidamak, as saying that a soccer match is 'Not an appropriate' place to hold a minute of silence for Rabin. Ha'aretz printed an article by former US President Bill Clinton: "What My Friend Rabin Understood."

Turkish President Abdullah Gul was quoted as saying in an interview with Maariv that the incursion by Israeli aircraft into Turkish

airspace was a mistake, and that Syrian President Bashar Assad wants peace with Israel.

Maariv reported that Industry, Trade, and Employment Minister Eli Yishai is striving to have "Jewish terrorists" (Jews who killed or tried to kill Arabs) receive a comprehensive pardon.

Leading media reported that the EU is holding two days of talks with the Palestinians and Israeli foreign ministers.

Yediot reported that on Sunday, in a speech he delivered to the Saban Forum, Foreign Ministry Director-General Aharon Abramovitch accused the International Atomic Energy Agency and its Director, Mohamed ElBaradei of thwarting international efforts to shore up sanctions against the Iranian nuclear program. Rep. Howard Berman (D-CA) was quoted as saying in an interview with The Jerusalem Post that stiffer sanctions should be applied on Iran. Yediot reported that an Israel Prisons Services representative exchanged business cards with an Iranian counterpart at a congress in Thailand.

Leading media reported that the Knesset's Education Committee voted against Education Minister Yuli Tamir's proposal to include discussion of the "Nakba" (catastrophe), the Palestinian version of the events of 1948, in the school curriculum.

Leading media cited the Lebanese newspaper Al-Akhbar as saying that Hizbullah has conducted a large-scale exercise south of the Litani River.

Ha'aretz cited AP as saying that on Monday some 200 Palestinian police sealed the crowded Nablus refugee camp of Balata and traded fire with militants holed up inside, the first major battle in Chairman Abbas's campaign to assert control over gunmen and persuade Israel he can implement a future peace deal.

Yediot reported that the IAF grounded its F-15 fleet due to faults in the plane's configuration. An F-15 crashed on Friday.

Ha'aretz cited the belief of President Peres that the Peace Conduit project from the Red Sea to the Dead Sea should be passed on to the private sector. However, Ha'aretz reported that National Infrastructure Minister Binyamin Ben-Eliezer would rather the government -- that is, his ministry -- pull the strings.

On Monday Channel 10-TV reported that the military censorship listened to international phone calls from 1973 to 2004.

Ha'aretz reported that on Monday the Histadrut Labor Federation threatened to declare a work dispute as a prelude to a general strike, unless the government entered into "sincere negotiations" with the striking teachers.

Leading media reported that on Monday far-Right activist Avigdor Eskin was arrested in an eavesdropping affair against Minister Avigdor Lieberman and the Russian-born, Israeli oligarch Michael Chernoy that could be part of the conflict between Chernoy and the Russian oligarch Oleg Deripaska. Yediot reported that Lieberman claims that he is being slandered over the affair. Makor Rishon-Hatzofe quoted Lieberman as saying that the men arrested in the affair wanted to connect him with the Russian mafia.

Leading media reported that Uri Shmuel, V.P. marketing and sales of the energy company Dor Alon, was arrested on Monday on suspicion of selling fuel originally meant for the PA without reporting to the tax authority. Shmuel allegedly pocketed profits totaling about 2 million shekels (approx. USD 505,300) from the transaction. Shmuel is suspected of income and tax fraud and money laundering. Investigators from the Tax Authority raided the home of Shmuel, partner of MK Esterina Tartman (Yisrael Beiteinu), and the homes of other suspects in the affair.

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Mideast:

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Summary:  
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The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized:  
"Compared to the Israeli need to rekindle dashed hopes, the missing 'psychological shift' on the Palestinian/Arab side is of tectonic proportions."

Zalman Shoval, a senior Likud member and former ambassador to the US, wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "There can be no doubt that everything that Olmert will say at Annapolis ... will make it difficult for Israel the day when true negotiations toward peace start."

Very liberal columnist B. Michael wrote in Yediot Aharonot: "One must totally lack a sense of smell not to sniff a heavy, well-known perfume coming from the whole story [of the alleged Syrian nuclear installation]."

The independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized: "Rabin's assassination proved that with demagoguery and violence it is easy to undermine the elected government, even if its decisions are backed by a majority in the Knesset."

Senior columnist Nahum Barnea wrote on page one of Yediot Aharonot: "The government is now entering the peace process, which will include an internal battle and controversial decisions. Under current circumstances, the no-respect syndrome becomes a dangerous problem."

Block Quotes:  
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II. "The Missing Shift"

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (11/6): "The premise [in comments made this week by Quartet envoy Tony Blair and US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice] is a tantalizing one: that there is a fundamental readiness for peace on both sides that is just waiting for the right diplomatic push. Probe a bit deeper, however, and it is evident that a far more basic 'psychological shift' is needed on the Palestinian and wider Arab side before the desired peace can become reality.... The two-state solution has always been dependent on two parallel 'psychological shifts': an Israeli acceptance of Palestinian national rights and a Palestinian/Arab acceptance of the Jewish right to a state in Israel. The former did not always exist.... The US and Israeli positions have changed beyond recognition in this respect. Moreover, this sea change in Israel has not just been on the governmental level but has permeated the public and transformed our politics. By contrast, no Arab or Palestinian leader has uttered the words 'Jewish state'.... For now, not only is there no Arab consensus on the acceptability, let alone desirability, of a Jewish state, but defending the notion of Jewish national rights in any part of 'Palestine' is still taboo. Compared to the Israeli need to rekindle dashed hopes, the missing 'psychological shift' on the Palestinian/Arab side is of tectonic proportions."

II. "The Trap of Annapolis"

Zalman Shoval, a senior Likud member and former ambassador to the US, wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (11/6): "There can be no doubt that everything that Olmert will say at Annapolis -- or what he has perhaps already told Abu Mazen -- will make it difficult for Israel the day when true negotiations toward peace start. This is only part of the problem, since Hamas may salvage any concession made to Abu Mazen.... A basic tenet in international law says that a government inherits the rights and commitments of its predecessors.... There also is a principle allowing a state to free itself from its commitments, should a fundamental change intervene in the circumstances, or if the other side radically violates its commitments. Should such a reality develop after Annapolis, the sides had better know that future Israeli governments will not evidently accept the view that Israel will be unconditionally committed to the results of Annapolis."

### III. "Syrian Legends"

Very liberal columnist B. Michael wrote in Yediot Aharonot (11/6): "One must totally lack a sense of smell not to sniff a heavy, well-known perfume coming from the whole story [of the alleged Syrian nuclear installation] -- a scent of political-intelligence spin, nauseatingly resembling the spin that preceded the Iraq war.... Both here and in the United States. Between emotions rising from the legends published by London's Sunday Times and the wonderment at Aviation Week's fairy-tales, one can also devote some minutes of thought to my version."

### IV. "Yigal Amir's Thousands of Sons"

The independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (11/6): "It is no coincidence that the Yitzhak Rabin Center for Israel Studies stands deserted, while on the soccer fields, the murderer is cheered and the victim is booed.... Thirty-eight percent of the religious public view Yigal Amir as a hero. The Rabin legacy is in fact the anti-Rabin legacy. At the present time, ahead of talks with the Palestinians, the legacy will be updated to become an anti-Olmert legacy.... You cannot preach democracy to those who scorn it, and who consider the Land of Israel more important.... We should and must debate Annapolis like Oslo, Taba and Camp David, as long as common ground exists between those involved in the debate, including a desire to reach an end to the conflict with our neighbors. The concern is that the religious right takes no interest in explanations by this side or that, and views eternal war with the Palestinians as better than giving up parts of the homeland. That is the source of the belief that no leader has the right to give in during negotiations, no matter how large of a majority supports him

in the Knesset; and anyone who does give in is a traitor.... Rabin's assassination proved that with demagoguery and violence it is easy to undermine the elected government, even if its decisions are backed by a majority in the Knesset. The cries of the Beitar fans on the soccer field are the first warning signs of the horror that awaits."

### V. "No Respect"

Senior columnist Nahum Barnea wrote on page one of Yediot Aharonot (11/6): "The disease that Israeli society suffers from can be described by two short words: No respect.... There is no respect around the cabinet table. The Defense Minister holds the Prime Minister in disdain, who holds the Foreign Minister in disdain and so on and so forth.... No teacher would ever permit pupils in his classroom to behave the way the teachers who were sent to disrupt the Prime Minister's speech at a conference on Monday in Tel Aviv did. The codes of behavior in the public arena are like the ones in a shared residential building in which the tenants are scrupulous about the cleanliness within their own apartments but toss their trash out the window into the public space beneath. The government is now entering the peace process, which will include an internal battle and controversial decisions. Under current circumstances, the no-respect syndrome becomes a dangerous problem. People talk a lot about the incitement that led up to the Rabin assassination. It was not so much the talk that was damaging than it was the atmosphere of lawlessness that reigned prior to the assassination. They succeeded in turning Rabin from an admired leader into a humiliated and disgraced leader. It is only too easy to imagine what they will do to Olmert."

JONES